

Cabinet



Forest Heath
District Council

Minutes of a meeting of the **Cabinet** held on
Tuesday 14 July 2015 at **6.00 pm** at the **Council Chamber, District**
Offices, College Heath Road, Mildenhall, IP28 7EY

Present: **Councillors**

Chairman James Waters (Leader)

Vice Chairman Robin Millar (Deputy Leader)

Stephen Edwards

Andy Drummond

By Invitation:

Rona Burt (Chairman of the Local Plan Working Group)

Simon Cole (Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny
Committee)

Bill Sadler (Vice Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny
Committee)

In Attendance:

Andrew Appleby

Lance Stanbury

75. **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor David Bowman.

76. **Minutes**

The minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 2 June 2015 were unanimously accepted as an accurate record and signed by the Leader.

77. **Open Forum**

No non-Cabinet Members in attendance wished to speak under this item.

78. **Public Participation**

There were no questions/statements from members of the public.

79. **Report from the Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee: 4 June 2015 (Report No CAB/FH/15/027)**

The Portfolio Holder for Resources and Performance presented this report on behalf of the Chairman of the Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee which informed the Cabinet of the following items which had been discussed by the Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee on 4 June 2015. The first seven items were considered jointly with St Edmundsbury Borough Council's Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee:

1. Internal Audit Annual Report 2014/2015 and Outline Internal Audit Plan 2015/2016.
2. Annual Governance Statement 2013/2014 Action Plan Update.
3. Key Performance Indicators and Quarter 4 Performance Report 2014/2015.
4. Performance Management Report 2015/2016.
5. West Suffolk Strategic Risk Register Quarterly Report – March 2015.
6. Biannual Corporate Complaints and Compliments Digest.
7. Work Programme Update.
8. Ernst and Young – Certification Report 2013/2014.
9. Ernst and Young – Presentation of External Audit Plan and Fees 2014/2015 and 2015/2016 Indicative Fees.
10. Financial Outturn Report (Revenue and Capital) 2014/2015.

With the vote being unanimous, it was

RESOLVED:

That the content of the report be noted.

80. **Report from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee: 11 June 2015 (Report No CAB/FH/15/028)**

The Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee presented this report which informed the Cabinet of the following items which had been discussed by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 11 June 2015:

1. Overview and Scrutiny Draft Annual Report 2014/2015.
2. Decisions Plan: July 2015 to May 2016.
3. Work Programme and Re-Appointments to Task Group/Suffolk County Council Health Scrutiny.

With the vote being unanimous, it was

RESOLVED:

That the content of the report be noted.

81. **Single Issue Review (SIR) of Core Strategy Policy CS7 and Site Specific Allocations (SSA) Local Plan - Consultation Documents (Report No CAB/FH/15/029)**

The Chairman of the Local Plan Working Group presented this report which explained that the Working Group had considered the following items of substantive business at their meeting on 30 June 2015:

1. The progress which had been made on the Core Strategy Single Issue Review (CS SIR) and the Site Allocations (SSA) Issues and Options Local Plan Consultation Documents.
2. To inform the final draft Core Strategy Single Issue Review (SIR) and Site Allocations Local Plan (SALP) Issues and Options documents for consultation.

Working Paper 1 to Report No CAB/FH/15/029 was the second 'Issues and Options' (Regulation 18) consultation document for the Core Strategy Single Issue Review. This document considered two options for the level of housing to be provided within the district from 2011 to 2031 and four reasonable alternative options for its distribution between towns and villages.

The Working Group had considered the content of Working Paper 1 and had expressed their general support for the options contained within the consultation document. A table of proposed amendments to the draft Single Issue Review document was also presented to the Working Group (attached as Working Paper 3) and Members expressed their support for the changes. In addition, three further changes to the document were proposed by the Working Group, which were included in the table of amendments.

Working Paper 2 to Report No CAB/FH/15/029 was the Site Allocations Issues and Options Local Plan (SALP) consultation document, which updated and superseded the issues and options consultation undertaken in 2006.

The Working Group had considered the content of Working Paper 2 and expressed their general support for the options contained within the consultation document. A table of proposed amendments to the SALP document were presented to the Working Group (attached as Working Paper 4) and Members expressed their support for the changes. In addition, two further changes to the document were proposed and which were included in the table of amendments.

Following approval by Cabinet of these Consultation Documents, the consultation would take place from 11 August 2015 for an eight week period (ending on 6 October 2015) and which would also include a series of events being held during September 2015.

With the vote being unanimous, it was

RESOLVED:

That:-

1. Progress made to the Core Strategy Single Issue Review (CS SIR) and Site Allocations (SSA) Issues and Options Local Plan Documents be endorsed.
2. The Core Strategy Single Issue Review (SIR) (Working Paper 1) and the Site Specific Allocations (SSA) Issues and Options (Working Paper 2) Local Plan Documents, Tables of Proposed Material Amendments (Working Papers 3 and 4) and accompanying Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)/Sustainability Appraisal (SA), together with supporting documents, be approved for public consultation.
3. The Head of Planning and Growth, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Growth, be authorised to make any minor typographical, factual, spelling and grammatical changes to these documents, provided that it does not materially affect the substance or meaning.

82. West Suffolk Operational Hub (Report No CAB/FH/15/030)

The Cabinet received this report which provided an update on the progress of the joint West Suffolk and Suffolk County Council project, including feasibility and deliverability of a West Suffolk Operational Hub at Hollow Road Farm, Bury St Edmunds, to deliver a combined depot, waste transfer station and Household Waste Recycling Centre for West Suffolk.

The Director explained that public opinion from the Parish Councils and residents in the vicinity of Hollow Road Farm was strongly opposed to the scheme, due to matters such as traffic and safety concerns and residential amenity. There were also concerns raised regarding the process followed to-date.

Although, some had favoured a split-site and believed that there was evidence to support that model, there was general agreement amongst councillors and many who had taken part in the consultation to-date, that a shared waste and operations hub was still a good concept to explore.

At the St Edmundsbury Borough Council (SEBC) Cabinet meeting held on 23 June 2015, Members had committed to providing more information and carrying out further consultation as to why the Councils had reached the initial conclusion that Hollow Road Farm was the best site and also inviting people to identify alternative and deliverable sites that met the necessary criteria. That consultation would continue later this year and comments and suggestions would be encouraged from across Forest Heath and St Edmundsbury, as well as the immediately neighbouring communities.

However, at the SEBC Council meeting held on 7 July 2015, approval was not given for the funding of £180,000 for the finalisation of the business case (£98,000 FHDC and £82,000 SEBC). Therefore, it was recommended that Recommendation (3) of this report be withdrawn. In the meantime, Officers would look at what other steps would need to be undertaken as a result of the decision not to fund further studies at the current time.

Following on from the update provided by the Director, the Cabinet also considered that, having noted the feedback received in response to the pre-application consultation on the proposed siting of the Hub, further consultation should take place before any planning application was made and that this consultation should include the process for site selection.

With the vote being unanimous, it was

RESOLVED:

That:-

1. The contents of the report and the summarised feedback from pre-application consultation be noted.
2. Further pre-application consultation to include the site selection be approved.

83. Mildenhall Hub Project (Report No CAB/FH/15/031)

The Cabinet received this report which updated Members on progress with the Mildenhall Hub project and identified the next steps required. The report explained:

- the assumptions made in assessing the business case (Section 1.2)
- the likely costs of the elements of the Hub that Forest Heath District Council would need to build itself (Section 1.3).
- how this cost might be met by Forest Heath District Council (Section 1.4).
- how Forest Heath District Council would need to work with other partners to deliver the Mildenhall Hub (Section 1.5).
- the help that would be needed from Central Government (Section 1.6).
- the next steps and a provisional timetable for the project, including the approval of an initial project budget of £50,000 (to be funded from the Delivering the Strategic Priorities and Medium Term Financial Strategy Reserve) so that the Council could contribute to the joint funding of various pieces of work and support (Section 1.7).

With the vote being unanimous, it was

RESOLVED:

That:-

1. The initial conclusions from due diligence of the Business Case and next steps for the project, as outlined in Report No CAB/FH/15/031, be approved.
2. A single-site scheme be the Council's preferred option for consulting on the Mildenhall Hub project.
3. A budget of £50,000 be approved, funded from the Delivering the Strategic Priorities and Medium Term Financial Strategy

(MTFS) Reserve, to meet Forest Heath's share of initial project management and development costs.

4. The Director be authorised to approve spending from this budget in consultation with the Leader of the Council.

84. **West Suffolk Facilities Management (Report No CAB/FH/15/032)**

The Cabinet received this report which sought approval for establishing a joint venture (JV) company with Eastern Facilities Management Services (EFMS) Ltd.

The Director, on behalf of the Portfolio Holder for Operations, drew relevant issues to the attention of the Cabinet, including that a review of Facilities Management (FM) services at Forest Heath District Council (FHDC) and St Edmundsbury Borough Council (SEBC) had been undertaken, which had highlighted an opportunity to standardise FM services into a single arrangement across West Suffolk. Four options had been considered to bring the FM arrangements together, as outlined in Section 2.3 of the report. Option Four had been recommended as the preferred way forward and the report provided details of the implications should this Option be adopted.

The following Appendices were attached to the report:

Appendix A:	West Suffolk sites where FM services were delivered
Appendix B:	Advantages and disadvantages of options considered
Appendix C:	EFMS Capability Statement
Exempt Appendix D:	Costs and savings
Exempt Appendix E:	EFMS Credit reference

The specific content of Exempt Appendices D and E were not discussed in public, therefore, there was no requirement to move into private session.

Following due consideration, the Cabinet considered Option Four should be progressed as recommended. The proposal would not only enable potential savings of 12.6% against the current costs of FM services across FHDC and SEBC, but also provided an existing opportunity for the West Suffolk Councils to deliver their FM services through this commercial enterprise.

With the vote being unanimous, it was

RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL:

That:-

1. The contents of Report No CAB/FH/15/032 be noted.
2. Approval be given to establish a Joint Venture Company with Eastern Facilities Management (EFMS) Ltd for the delivery of Facilities Management services at Forest Heath District Council and St Edmundsbury Borough Council.

3. Delegated authority be given to the Head of Operations, in consultation with the Head of Resources and Performance, the Service Manager (Legal) and respective Portfolio Holders for Operations to finalise and confirm the outstanding legal and governance matters outlined herein at 3.11 to 3.15 and 3.21 of Report No CAB/FH/15/032, before signing contracts to establish the new Joint Venture company with EFMS.

85. Revenues Collection and Performance Write-Offs (Report No CAB/FH/15/033)

The Portfolio Holder for Resources and Performance presented this report, which sought approval for the write-off of uncollectable amounts in respect of Council Tax and Business Rates. The specific reasons for recommending these write-offs, were included in the exempt Appendices 1 and 2 to Report No CAB/FH/15/033).

The Portfolio Holder also referred to paragraphs 3.2 and 3.3 of the report which set out the collection rates for both National Non Domestic Rates (NDR) and Council Tax as at 30 June 2015.

The Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee expressed his frustrations regarding businesses who owe outstanding debts to the Council and considered that this type of information should be made available within the public domain. The Portfolio Holder replied and explained that the Council worked hard to attempt to recover these outstanding debts. The Portfolio Holder also stated that he would undertake further investigations to determine what debt information, if any, could be released into the public domain.

With the vote being unanimous, it was

RESOLVED:

That the write-off of the amounts detailed in the exempt Appendices 1 and 2 to Report No CAB/FH/15/033, be approved as follows:

1. Exempt Appendix 1: Business Rates totalling £36,545.23
2. Exempt Appendix 2: Sundry Debts totalling £4,129.57

86. Joint ARP Debt Management and Recovery Policy (Report No CAB/FH/15/034)

The Portfolio Holder for Resources and Performance presented this report which sought approval for a joint Anglia Revenues and Benefits Partnership (ARP) Debt Management and Recovery Policy.

The Portfolio Holder drew relevant issues to the attention of the Cabinet, including that the draft policy set out the mechanism for billing and the collection and recovery of Council Tax, Non-Domestic Rates and Housing Benefits Overpayments across West Suffolk and the wider ARP.

The policy document, which was attached as Appendix A, replaced previous policies of the ARP and updated the content to reflect changes to recent enforcement legislation.

With the vote being unanimous, it was

RESOLVED:

That the Joint ARP Debt Management and Recovery Policy as set out in Appendix A to Report No CAB/FH/15/034, be approved.

87. West Suffolk Sundry Debt Management and Recovery Policy (Report No CAB/FH/15/035)

The Portfolio Holder for Resources and Performance presented this report which sought approval for a new West Suffolk Sundry Debt Management and Recovery Policy.

The Portfolio Holder drew relevant issues to the attention of the Cabinet, including that the draft policy set out the mechanism for invoicing, collection and recovery of sundry debts across the Forest Heath District and St Edmundsbury Borough Councils (West Suffolk).

The policy document, which was attached as Appendix A, replaced previous policies of the two Councils by bringing them together into a single document and updating the content to reflect the changes introduced by the single financial management system. This Policy excluded the activities and debt of the Council through its revenues and benefits services by Anglia Revenues Partnership, which was the subject of a separate report on the agenda (Report No CAB/FH/15/034 refers).

The new draft document also placed greater emphasis on pre-payment for services using online methods, in light of the Councils' channel shift agenda and proposed roll-out of more self-service payment options.

With the vote being unanimous, it was

RESOLVED:

That the West Suffolk Sundry Debt Management and Recovery Policy, contained in Appendix A to Report No CAB/FH/15/035, be approved.

88. Decisions Plan: July 2015 to May 2016 (Report No CAB/FH/15/036)

The Cabinet considered Report No CAB/FH/15/036, which was the Cabinet Decisions Plan covering the period July 2015 to May 2016.

Members took the opportunity to review the forthcoming decisions of the Cabinet. The Deputy Leader outlined the on-going work within Suffolk on devolution and explained that it was the intention to submit a proposal on a Suffolk Devolution Bid to Government, during September 2015. Therefore, it was noted that this item would need to be scheduled to Cabinet and Council accordingly, for formal approval, prior to its submission.

89. **Exclusion of the Press and Public**

Refer to Minute Nos 90. and 91. below.

90. **Exempt Appendices: West Suffolk Facilities Management (para 3)
(Appendices D and E to Report No CAB/FH/15/032)**

The Cabinet received Exempt Appendices D and E to Report No CAB/FH/15/032, however, as no reference was made to specific detail, this item was not held in private session.

91. **Exempt Appendices: Revenues Collection Performance and Write-Offs
(paras 1 and 2) (Appendices 1 and 2 to Report No CAB/FH/15/033)**

The Cabinet received Exempt Appendices 1 and 2 to Report No CAB/FH/15/033, however, as no reference was made to specific detail, this item was not held in private session.

The Meeting concluded at 6.30 pm

Signed by:

Chairman
